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Drug Intoxication and Withdrawal Chart

Intoxication and withdrawal symptoms are given across four major drug groups of Alcohol, Benzodiazepines, Opiates and Amphetamines. Some of the symptoms in *mild to moderate* withdrawal, while not life threatening, can result in extreme discomfort and should not be underestimated.

These signs can be from other causes. For example, influenza symptoms can mimic opiate withdrawal; fatigue from hepatitis or diarrhoea can resemble opiate intoxication. Careful assessment and/or toxicology should be undertaken to determine symptom causation.

Rarely, the signs of intoxication identified in this chart can also result from withdrawal. If so, they may signal a severe withdrawal syndrome and medical attention should be sought immediately.

Three of the main dangers of withdrawal are:

1. Death from overdose while relapsing due to reduced tolerance
2. Death from suicide if drug use is a primary coping mechanism if supports and underlying social/pathology are not managed (eg coping with depression, family violence)
3. Child and partner abuse from anxiety induced withdrawal symptoms.

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Drug Symptoms Chart

Alcohol

Intoxication	Mild to Moderate Withdrawal	Severe Withdrawal
Ataxia (difficulty walking)	Tremors	Delirium Tremens (DT's)
Slurred speech	Nausea	Visual, tactile or auditory hallucinations
Disinhibition	Anxiety	Seizure
Low blood pressure	Sweats	Vomiting & diarrhoea
Smells of alcohol	Sleep disturbances	Depression

Tranquilizers

Benzodiazepines: eg Valium, Temazepam, Rohypnol, Serepax

Intoxication	Mild to Moderate Withdrawal	Severe Withdrawal
Slurred speech	Anxiety	Depression,
Ataxia	Sleep disturbances	Suicidal thoughts,
Sedation	Hypersensitivity to noise, light, touch	Agoraphobia
Nystagmus (unusual eye movements)	Perceptual disturbance	Seizure
Low blood pressure	Feelings of unreality	
Drooling	Memory impairment	
Disinhibited	Headache	
	Aches & pains	
	Palpitations	

Opioids

Heroin, Methadone, Codeine

Intoxication	Mild to Moderate Withdrawal	Severe Withdrawal
Sedation	Lacrimination (runny eyes)	
Pinpoint pupils	Rhinorrhoea (runny nose)	
Low blood pressure	Perspiration	
Slowed pulse	Yawning	
Itching & scratching	Restlessness	
	Insomnia	
	Dilated pupils	
	Anorexia/nausea	
	Weakness	
	Gooseflesh	

Muscle aches, leg cramps
Joint pain, back ache,
abdominal cramps
Diarrhoea
Hot and cold flushes
Fatigue
Drug seeking behaviour

Amphetamines

Dexamphetamine (Speed). Ritalin, MDMA (Ecstasy)

Intoxication	Mild to Moderate Withdrawal	Severe Withdrawal
Agitation	Anxiety	Psychosis
Irritability	Agitation	Suicidal thoughts
Grandiosity	Depression	Existential crisis
Dilated pupils	Fatigue	
Fine tremor	Extended sleep	
Sweating	Increased appetite	
Rapid speech & movement		

Drugs and Pregnancy

While it is generally advisable to be drug-free during pregnancy (apart from the ones prescribed by a doctor), withdrawing from alcohol or other drugs while pregnant may carry risks. It is best to seek advice from a doctor or drugs specialist worker before either using or withdrawing from alcohol or other drug use while pregnant.

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Much of this material was adapted from: Frank L. & Peard J, (1995) *New Concepts in Drug Withdrawal: A Resource Handbook Monograph No 4* University of Melbourne and Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, Parkville.

This excellent manual was developed as a part of the *Services for Alcohol and Drug Withdrawal (SAW) Project* in Victoria. Telephone (03) 344 4000 Fax (03) 344 5104

A valuable series of self-help books on stopping drug use and dealing with withdrawal called the *Getting Through Withdrawal* is available from Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre Inc. 54 Gertrude St, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065. Ph (03) 9254 8050 Fax (03) 9416 3420

Related Internet Links

The following GP Information Supplements were developed by the NSW Central Coast Area Health Service and are located on the [CEIDA](#) web site in PDF format.

[Detoxification from Alcohol PDF 15 KB CEIDA](#)



[Benzodiazepine](#)

[Amphetamine Dependence & Withdrawal PDF 14 KB CEIDA](#)

[Heroin Addiction \(including intoxication & withdrawal information\) PDF 17 KB CEIDA](#)

[Cannabis Treatment & Dependence \(including intoxication & withdrawal information\) PDF 17 KB CEIDA](#)

[Smoking Cessation PDF 15 KB CEIDA](#)

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OPIATES (Narcotics)

VARIETIES AND SLANG TERMS

Codeine:

- school boy

Heroin:

- H
- stuff
- junk
- horse
- Harry
- smack

Morphine:

- M
- white stuff
- cube
- morf
- mud

Opiates are habit-forming drugs that dull the senses, relieve pain, and induce sleep.

Some forms of opiates are morphine, heroin, and codeine.

Opiates may be in the form of dark brown chunks, or white or brownish powder.

A tolerance to the drugs may occur if a person uses them over a period of time. A cross tolerance may also occur. This means that if a person uses one type of opiate, they will develop a tolerance to all opiates.

Addiction to opiates such as heroin causes many dangerous physical and psychological effects.

IMMEDIATE EFFECTS

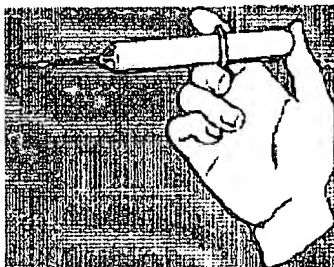
- decreases awareness of the outside world
- vomiting
- drowsiness
- nodding off
- depression of respiration
- unconsciousness
- dilated pupils

These effects may last approximately 4 hours.

EFFECTS OF PROLONGED USE

- physical dependence
- psychological dependence

- lethargy and indifference to environment and people
- reduction of bowel movements
- infections of the heart lining and valves
- skin abscesses
- congested lungs
- death



INJECTIONS CAN CAUSE

- hepatitis
- abscesses
- blood poisoning
- AIDS

WITH LARGE DOSES

- user cannot be awakened
- pupils become very small
- skin becomes cold, moist, and bluish in color
- breathing slows down
- death from overdose

SIGNS OF OPIATE ADDICTION

- persistent and regular use of the drug
- attempts to stop which result in withdrawal
- continued use despite damaging physical/psychological problems
- compulsive drug-seeking behavior
- need to increase the dosage

Because opiates are extremely addictive, withdrawal symptoms occur when a person stops or decreases their use.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

- uneasiness
- yawning
- tremors
- crying
- diarrhea
- weight loss
- abdominal cramps
- goose bumps
- runny nose

- severe craving for the drug

Withdrawal symptoms begin within 24 hours after last use and may last up to 7-10 days. Although these symptoms cause discomfort, the benefits to a person who stops using opiates greatly outweigh an addiction to the drugs. These benefits include improved health and greater enjoyment of everyday activities. Withdrawal can be dangerous depending upon the amount of the drug the person used.

Medical attention is STRONGLY ADVISED!

OPIATES AND PREGNANCY

Research has shown that nearly half of the women who are dependent on opiates suffer anemia, heart disease, diabetes, pneumonia, or hepatitis during pregnancy and childbirth. These women also experience more:

- spontaneous abortions
- breech deliveries
- caesarean sections
- premature births
- stillbirths
- infants with withdrawal symptoms

Many of these babies die.

EXTENT OF USE

In 1992, the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services reported 49,899 emergency room episodes related to heroin, morphine, and codeine. Of these:

- 7.61% were white
- 15.14% were black
- 20.2% were Hispanic
- 6% involved people 18-25 years old
- 12.29% involved people 26-34 years old
- 16.42% involved people 35 years and older

In 1992, there were 3,762 reported deaths due to heroin, morphine, and codeine.

The most common drugs mixed with heroin, morphine, and codeine are alcohol and cocaine.

If you suspect a problem with opiates and/or other drug use, please contact the **National Drug Information Treatment and Referral Hotline** at (800) 662-HELP(4357). They can supply you with:

- printed materials
- treatment services in your state
- referrals for treatment
- alcohol treatment services
- adolescent and family services in your state

AMPHETAMINES

SLANG TERMS

- uppers
- ups
- wake ups
- bennies
- dexies
- black beauties
- jollies
- speed

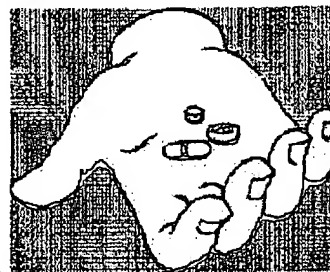
An amphetamine is a drug that is a stimulant to the central nervous system.

Amphetamines are colorless and may be inhaled, injected, or swallowed.

These drugs may be used medically to treat depression, obesity, and other conditions.

Amphetamines are also used non-medically to:

- avoid sleep
- improve athletic performance
- counter the effects of depressant drugs



Amphetamines may be referred to as speed or uppers.

IMMEDIATE EFFECTS

- increased talkativeness
- increased aggressiveness
- increased breathing rate
- increased heart rate
- increased blood pressure
- reduced appetite
- dilated pupils
- visual hallucinations
- auditory hallucinations

ACTIONS BECOME

- compulsive
- repetitive
- less organized
- suspicious

- self-conscious

EFFECTS OF LARGE DOSES

- fever and sweating
- dry mouth
- headache
- paleness
- blurred vision
- dizziness
- irregular heartbeat
- tremors
- loss of coordination
- collapse

Death may also occur due to burst blood vessels in the brain, heart failure, or very high fever.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

- mental illness similar to paranoid schizophrenia
- malnutrition due to suppression of appetite
- increased susceptibility to illness due to poor diet, lack of sleep and unhealthy environment
- violence and aggression
- multiple drug users may use other drugs to counter unwanted side effects of amphetamines
- infections resulting from IV injections
- blockage of blood vessels
- tolerance and dependence

Amphetamines are addictive. Because of this, when the user discontinues use or reduces the amount he/she uses, withdrawal symptoms may occur.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

- severe exhaustion
- deep sleep lasting from 24 to 48 hours
- psychotic reaction
- extreme hunger
- deep depression
- anxiety reactions
- long but disturbed sleep

Although someone using amphetamines may experience withdrawal symptoms for a short period of time, the benefits to a person who stops using the drug greatly outweigh an addiction to amphetamines.

These benefits include improved health and greater enjoyment of everyday activities.

EFFECTS OF USE DURING PREGNANCY

It is possible for babies of mothers who use amphetamines to be born with:

- cardiac defects
- cleft palate
- birth defects

- addiction and withdrawal

Because amphetamines suppress appetite and give the user feelings of energy, they are sometimes abused by people who are trying to lose weight.

But, because appetite is suppressed and decreased, malnutrition occurs. The user will not be getting enough vitamins or minerals and will become ill more often. He/she may also lose a dangerous amount of weight.

When a person stops using amphetamines, he/she experiences strong hunger. Eventually the appetite returns to its normal level or increases.

Abuse of amphetamines is not a safe nor effective way to lose weight.

If you suspect a problem with amphetamines and/or other drug use, please contact the **National Drug Information Treatment and Referral Hotline at (800) 662-HELP(4357)**. They can supply you with:

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